

Message Text

SECRET

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y T E X T

FOR UNDER SECRETARY SISCO, ASSISTANT SECRETARY ATHERTON
AND PM DIRECTOR VEST

E.O. 11652: GDS

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TAGS: MARR EG US

SUBJECT: USE BY US VESSELS OF ALEXANDRIA SHIPYARDS

1. YOU WILL RECALL THAT LAST FALL WE EXPLORED, WITH WASHINGTON'S APPROVAL, POSSIBILITY OF USING ALEXANDRIA SHIPYARDS TO REPAIR TWO USN LIFT VESSELS WHICH HAD BEEN USED IN SUEZ CANAL CLEARANCE AND WERE ABOUT TO BE DEACTIVATED. ALTHOUGH COSTS WERE MODERATE, EGYPTIANS EQUIVOCATED. INSTEAD OF ALEXANDRIA SHIPYARD, THEY OFFERED PORT SAID OR SUEZ FACILITIES. NOW, HOWEVER, THEY HAVE THEMSELVES BROACHED SUBJECT OF USE OF ALEXANDRIA SHIPYARD (SPECIFICALLY AL GABBARY SHIPYARD) BY US VESSELS.

2. IN MID-JUNE CONGEN ALEXANDRIA RECEIVED LETTER FROM CAPTAIN A. TAWFIK, BOARD DIRECTOR OF THE ALEXANDRIA MARINE AND SHIP REPAIR DEPT, RECALLING USN'S EARLIER INQUIRY OF LAST FALL AND STATING THAT DURING RECENT VISIT OF USS LITTLE ROCK, HE HAD GIVEN UNIDENTIFIED USN OFFICER A COPY OF SHIPYARD TARIFF TO BE
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SENT TO CAPTAIN BOYD, USN. TAWFIK INVITED BOTH USN AND

AMERICAN MERCHANT VESSELS TO MAKE USE OF ALEXANDRIA SHIPYARD FOR REPAIR PURPOSES. MY ALUSNA POINTS OUT THAT COSTS, AS SET FORTH IN TARIFF SCHEDULE, ARE REASONABLE AND MIGHT WELL INTEREST SIXTH FLEET AND PERHAPS AMERICAN SHIPPERS. FEW DAYS AGO, DR. AHMED EFFAT CONTACTED CONGEN AND, AFTER REFERRING TO TAWFIK'S LETTER, CLAIMED IT WAS "VERY IMPORTANT" USG SHOULD TAKE ACTION ON IT QUICKLY.

3. SO FAR AS AMERICAN MERCHANTMEN ARE CONCERNED, MATTER IS CLEARLY ONE FOR OWNERS TO DECIDE. CONGEN ALEXANDRIA IS OBTAINING EXTRA COPY OF TARIFF SO THAT ITS SHIPPING OFFICER CAN ADVISE AMERICAN MASTERS OF ALEXANDRIA SHIPYARD CAPABILITIES.

4. IN CASE OF USN VESSELS, POLICY QUESTION CLEARLY ARISES RE EXTENT TO WHICH WE SHOULD ENCOURAGE THIS. ON ONE HAND, COSTS ARE LOW. (THIS WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO BE PAID IN DOLLARS RATHER THAN EGYPTIAN POUNDS, BUT WE COULD EXPLORE THIS ASPECT.) ALEXANDRIA IS ALSO CONVENIENT FOR SIXTH FLEET AND OFFERS USEFUL LIBERTY PORT. AVAILABILITY OF THE EXCELLENT INDUSTRIAL FACILITIES AT AL GABBARY WOULD BE A DEFINITE LOGISTIC ADVANTAGE FOR SIXTH FLEET. PRESENCE OF USN SHIPS IN THIS SHIPYARD WOULD ALSO BE OF MAJOR INTELLIGENCE SIGNIFICANCE SO LONG AS SOVIET NAVAL VESSELS (INCLUDING SUBMARINES) CONTINUE TO MAKE EXTENSIVE USE OF AL GABBARY.

5. AGAINST THIS, WE WOULD HAVE TO CONSIDER POTENTIALLY ADVERSE REACTIONS FROM CONGRESSIONAL QUARTERS AND ISRAELIS TO OUR MAKING REGULAR USE OF ALEXANDRIA FACILITIES. SOVIETS, WHO HAVE BEEN LIMITED IN THEIR USE OF EGYPTIAN MILITARY FACILITIES, WOULD OF COURSE ALSO BE UNHAPPY. IN CONTEXT THEIR CURRENT PROBLEMS WITH EGYPTIANS, THEY HAVE APPARENTLY HAD A REPORT FROM SOMEONE THAT GOE INTENDS GRANT NAVAL FACILITIES TO USG AND ARE MUCH EXERCISED ABOUT THIS. THAT REPORT MAY BE PROMPTED BY TAWFIK'S INVITATION, WHICH HE HAS PROBABLY BANDIED ALL OVER ALEXANDRIA.

R6. APART FROM ABOVE CONSIDERATIONS, I RATHER SUSPECT
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THAT TAWFIK MAY HAVE ACTED ON HIS OWN AND WITHOUT HIGH LEVEL APPROACH. EFFAT'S INVOLVEMENT SHOULD NOT BE CONSTRUED TO MEAN HIGH LEVEL ENDORSEMENT. OUR ARRANGEMENT WITH SADAT IS THAT NORMALLY US NAVAL VESSELS WILL VISIT EGYPTIAN PORTS ONLY IF SPECIFICALLY INVITED BY THE PRESIDENT. I HAVE NO REASON TO BELIEVE HE HAS CHANGED HIS VIEWS. CAIRO NEWSPAPER AL-AHRAM ON JUNE 22 PUBLISHED TEXT OF RECENT SADAT INTERVIEW WITH MANAGING EDITOR

OF LEBANESE NEWSPAPER, AL ANWAR, DURING WHICH LATTER
ASKED ABOUT POSSIBILITY SIXTHFLT MIGHT BE GIVEN
FACILITIES AT ALEXANDRIA. SADAT RESPONDED THAT QUESTION
POINTLESS. HE HAD GIVEN SOVIETS FACILITIES IN RETURN
FOR THEIR SIDING WITH EGYPT DURING BLACK DAYS. WHY
SHOULD HE GIVE SUCH FACILITIES TO AMERICANS WHEN HIS
POLICY IS NEITHER TO EAST OR WEST. QUERY, HE REPROVED
HIS QUESTIONER, IS WITHOUT JUSTIFICATION SINCE IT
CONFLICTS WITH MAIN EGYPTIAN POLICY LINE. THUS, IF WE
WERE TO APPROVE IN PRINCIPLE USN USE OFALEXANDRIA
FACILITIES FOR REPAIR PURPOSES, I BELIEVE WE WOULD FIRST
HAVE TO CHECK WITH SADAT WHETHER SUCH IS POLITICALLY
AGREEABLE TO HIM. I RATHER SUSPECT HIS RESPONSE WOULD
AT THIS TIME BE NEGATIVE.

7. IN ANY CASE, I NEED DEPT'S GUIDANCE ON WHAT WE
SHOULD SAY TO TAWFIK AND USN ON THIS SCORE. I ASSUME
DEPT WILL ALSO DISCUSS MATTER WITH DOD AND USN AND ADVISE
THEM OF ITS POSITION.
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